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# THE LEISURE HOUR.

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—*Couper.*



ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

## TOO SOON.

CHAPTER I.—AN OLD WARDROBE.

Mr. WILLIAMS sat looking at his daughter. Probably the wrench which the journey to Italy had brought into his daily life, severing him for a time from the habit of study which had become more to him than any natural claim of kindred, had drawn his affections to the surface again; he had not had time since his return to yield himself entirely to the absorbing

interest of his researches, and Ursula's return home, and the emotion she had shown, had effaced the impression of her wilfulness at Dover. He felt disturbed and expectant; the half-mystery that hung over the estrangement of the husband and wife added a certain curiosity to anxiety.

"If either of them would speak out I should know better whose side to take; perhaps they are both wrong." He gave a perplexed look across the breakfast-table. Ursula was looking beyond him

into the next room; she was very pale against her deep mourning dress, and it seemed to her father that her eyes were larger and more full of intense expression than ever. He sat watching her for some minutes. She did not move; she was more languid even than she had been during her illness.

"It was a mistake not to tell her the whole truth. If she had heard of that accident, she would have been roused out of herself. I believe now that if Michael came over here and said good-bye, they would both be much happier; better still if they were to make it up and go away to Russia together. I cannot see any good in his silence and in this long separation. So far I have blamed Ursula; she has behaved in a silly, childish way; but now I really think she is hardly dealt by."

The whole affair was to him incomprehensible, and it made him silent and unhappy; he had been so absorbed at first by his grief for Aunt Sophy, and then in anxiety for Ursula during her illness, that the estrangement had gone on widening for some time before he had noticed it. He wished now to ask Ursula how it had begun.

He looked at her pale, sad face, and his words were checked on his lips.

"What good will it do? I shall only bring back all the discomfort we had at Dover, and I cannot urge her now to go to her husband. The poor child is so sensitive that she will think I am tired of her, and—and"—a flush came in Mr. Williams's face—"Helder's manner was so very cold and forced when he told me his journey was decided, that I am not at all sure he cares to see her again; besides, that was a week ago—he may have started by this time. I wish I had insisted on his speaking out, I might have written."

He sighed, and as he looked at Ursula, a new and startling thought came to him. What was she to do with herself in this long period? Life at Vine Cottage must be so changed for her without her aunt!

"Ursula, my dear"—he spoke with so much hesitation that Ursula gathered at once some announcement was coming—"I am afraid you must be very dull all day alone; what do you do to amuse yourself?"

"I"—Ursula laughed—"oh, I do nothing. I have got into idle ways in Italy; besides, there really is nothing to do." She gave a weary sigh.

"Can I do anything in your study?" She looked up as if she thought that was the meaning of his question; but her father felt that all the old eagerness had gone out of her voice. At one time she delighted in any work among his books and papers.

"Well, no, thank you; but I think as you have a long spell of this solitude to look forward to, you know"—he looked cheerfully at her—"if I were you I should take up my studies again."

"I feel too stupid."

Her words sounded fretful. Really, she had to go to the window to hide the tears that were brimming over.

There was no hope, then!

Her father would not deceive her, she was sure of that; there had been a dull certainty in his words which beat upon her heart and made her realise the truth. She was parted then from Michael; possibly he was already far out of reach.

"There is one thing you can do for me"—Mr. Williams got up and folded his newspaper, a signal that he was departing—"there is your Aunt Sophy's

wardrobe, and there are many little things which belonged to her. I shall be so very glad if you will look through all these things, keep anything you wish, and give the rest away. Except Frank, there is no one who has any claim or interest, and I think the sooner it is done the better."

He put a bunch of keys on the table, and went away before Ursula could make up her mind to protest. Decision and arrangement were beyond her, especially in this unnerved, listless mood.

"I can look through the things and make a list, but I certainly shall not decide on what is to be done with them."

She could not make up her mind to begin, but at last she went up-stairs with the bunch of keys. They belonged to an old-fashioned wardrobe with sliding shelves above shut in by doors and drawers below. She opened the drawers first, and looked dully through her aunt's linen; it seemed to her there was less power of association in this monotonous white, which might have belonged to any one. At last she unlocked the doors above.

There were not many dresses on the shelves, and some of them had little interest for Ursula. One or two had only been put on for state occasions, to dine at the Rectory, or else worn when there had been company at Vine Cottage.

A vivid memory came to Ursula that she had always been excited and unreal on these occasions, and had, in some way or other, always contradicted her aunt. She put the dresses back on the shelf with a sharp sigh, there was no pleasant link to the past in them. On the shelf below, a dress lay shrouded in tissue-paper wrappings. Ursula lifted this out, but she made no attempt to open it; she had helped to choose that dress, and she knew well enough that Aunt Sophy had only worn it once, and then had put it away, thinking it too young and gay for anything but another wedding.

"She would have worn it at Frank's if she had lived."

Frank's wedding! Why had she called up this vision just when her new occupation had set her free for awhile from the tyranny of her sorrow?

Yes, of course, Frank's wedding would come, and she should be obliged to witness Frank's happiness, and to see how happy Phoebe made him.

"But Frank will make Phoebe happy too," she said, impetuously; "he is satisfied with her as she is; he will not turn her over to a Miss Fraser to be improved. Oh! if Michael had only been patient with me! He need not have been afraid that I was satisfied with myself, I never could be: why would have been a delight to improve myself to please him; but to be told to copy Miss Fraser—I don't believe one woman in a thousand would even have borne it as I did."

Ursula stopped; her face had grown hot and flushed; she became aware, in that startling way in which such a fact is perceived rather than realised, that she had changed. She stood before the open press, stayed in the midst of her work, sightless to all but the change she saw in her mind. Again she blushed vividly. She had just asserted to herself that but for Michael's setting up of Rachel Fraser she should have tried to improve in household skill, and, instead of this, what had really happened? She had so scorned the idea of housewifery, that her first married sorrow had been that her husband could even desire she should lower her intellect to such a

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degrading study. She remembered that she had poured out her misery in verses, and had felt a secret contempt, because Michael thought the ordering a dinner worth consideration.

"It was perhaps foolish to write the verses, but still I was higher-minded then," she said, sadly; "I have deteriorated. I believe illness often makes people frivolous and commonplace; my father was right in thinking study would be good for me."

She did not feel as happy even as she had felt five minutes ago; the chastening memory of Aunt Sophy had dimmed. She felt more like the unsubdued Ursula, who had so utterly refused to be guided by Rachel Fraser.

She raised the carefully-wrapped parcel from the sofa to replace it on the shelf, and then she noticed that another dress still lay there which she had not yet examined; it was a black silk, and it lay quite at the back of the shelf.

Ursula set down the parcel again, and took out the gown carelessly enough. She had forgotten what she was doing in the proud feeling she had summoned.

The gown unfolded itself, and hung down in her loose grasp, and Ursula roused suddenly from acting out the past.

Here was a memory that chained her by every feeling to her dead aunt. This was the gown Aunt Sophy had been wearing daily. She had worn it the last time they had been together, on the eve of Ursula's wedding-day.

How the thick clouds lifted now—the very scene was changed!

Ursula saw herself in the back parlour sitting listlessly in the arm-chair, longing for the new life which was to be so cloudless; even the irritation which the gravity of the gentle face had created came back.

She saw Aunt Sophy's hesitating effort to speak, and then came the words that she had spoken.

Aunt Sophy had said that Ursula must "trust Michael as much as she loved him, or her happiness would be wrecked."

No vision from a land of spirits could have struck a more vivid chill. Ursula stood shivering, white as death. "Trust!" Her brain seemed to have lost power, or she had lost the power to convince it. Her creed of life had been that love was omnipotent, that two people who loved must make one another happy, and what had her experience proved?

"But if love were mutual—equal—it would prove sufficient."

Love—what is love? She glances at the gown she still holds, and then she lets it fall. What is any love she has ever shown compared to the patient, unrewarded love that she scarcely guessed at till it was no longer here on earth? If her love for Michael had been true love, it would have gone on in the same unexacting patience and self-denial that Aunt Sophy's did. Which left off loving first, she or Michael?

"I never left off, I love still."

From where Ursula knows not, it only seems to come from the empty air; but distinctly to her heart, as if a human voice uttered it, comes the question,—

"How do you love?"

She looks round with wild affrighted eyes, but she has no power to move—no power either to shirk the stern inquiry which pierces through all her folly and her pride,—

How have you shown your love?

Again the image of her husband rises before Ursula. She sees the wistful look with which he left her, she hears his tender, self-accusing words; how often before that his eyes had sought the reason of the coldness she tried so hard to keep up; how wicked, how mad, her sullenness was!

And then in one great rush of inner vision—a mercy that is sometimes granted—Ursula sees her Self; she sees the erring child in its life of daily struggle, and then the wilful girl, thinking herself so uncomprehended, so quick to take offence at others, so slow to realise the forbearance shown by others to herself.

She sinks down on her knees, and then as the blackness reveals itself, as she sees the leprosy of Self that covers her whole soul, she crouches down on the ground and hides her eyes from the light.

Words long forgotten, holy words she has read and heard read, strike on her heart as if they would cleave a passage through the pride that has so long cased it in self-deceit.

Ursula has gone on all her life telling herself she is not concealed. She knows she is high-spirited, and eccentric, and faulty; but she has said this without alarm or horror. She has had—if she had gone to the root of this matter she would have known that she has had a secret satisfaction that she has a high spirit, and is in most ways unlike other people. Now, terror and loathing are too strong for tears, she crouches down lower and lower, she longs to escape from herself. It is not only her father and her aunt and Michael she has sinned against; the dread question which still strikes on her heart, and will be answered if she does not harden herself against it, is searching for the deep root of her sin.

It asks her as she lies cowering and trembling what she has been living for; and Ursula knows the answer, though she cannot speak it: she has neither lived for God or man, only for herself.

Self! She sees the idol now, no longer pranked out in the garb her fancy made for its deformity—in all the hideousness of reality she sees herself. It may be that were such a revelation lasting, frail human nature could not endure existence; but, by God's mercy, where it has once been granted it is one of the truest helps to amendment.

How long she lay on the ground in her abasement Ursula never knew. When she rose up, she knelt down reverently at the little table where Aunt Sophy had so often knelt.

"Oh God, have mercy!" she murmured; "have I gone on all these years taking love as my right and never showing any? All might suffer through me, but I alone was to be spared!" . . . .

Tears came at last, bitter contrite tears, for wrongs too late now to be atoned for; and with these, for the first time in her life, Ursula poured out heartfelt thanks and praise to the Love which had borne with her till it had at last won her to feel its transforming presence in her soul.

#### CHAPTER LI.—RETURN.

MR. WILLIAMS was silent and preoccupied when he came in, and this was a relief to Ursula.

As soon as dinner was over she went up-stairs and put on her walking-dress.

When she came down her father was sitting over the fire.

"Can you tell me"—the strange sound in her voice made him turn round quickly—"if Michael is still in London?"

"Well, yes; I was going to tell you he starts in a day or two, but—" He looked at her and hesitated. Ursula shook so that she leaned against the door for support.

"May a cab be sent for?" she said; and then she went across the room and knelt down beside her father.

"Father, I am going to Michael to see if he will forgive me. I do not know that I have been worse to him than I always was to you, and—and her"—she stopped to check her tears—"but you have forgiven; you always forgave, so perhaps he will."

"My darling"—her father kissed her and placed her in a chair—"my poor dear child, you are doing right now; don't excite and distress yourself; pray don't, my dear, dear child"—for she had given way to a fit of bitter sobbing—"there, there, you will be quite ill; think of the servants, dear; you shall go directly, I will take you home myself."

In her heart Ursula would have liked best to go alone, but she only sobbed out "Thank you."

But her father did not disturb her; he sat silently beside her in the cab, and he did not speak again to her till just before they reached the house, then he touched her arm.

"There is something I think you ought to know now, Ursula; in my opinion you ought to have heard of it when it first occurred. I don't know if you ever made much inquiry about your husband's illness; on his way from the station to Mr. Farquharson's house he was thrown out of a dog-cart on to a rough stony road—his arm was broken, and he was severely bruised and shaken; the fracture was so serious that at first it was thought he would not regain the use of his arm."

"Oh, why was I not told?" and then Ursula checked herself. What right had she to murmur now?

"Michael would not have you told at first, he was so afraid of alarming you. He could not send for you, and he thought he should come home and tell you himself, but the doctors would not allow him to travel. Then he heard of your journey, and he thought it would distress you to learn by poor Sophy's sick-bed how ill he had been; then came your illness; and afterwards, I believe, your silence wounded him, and he was unwilling to give you any motive for returning to him beyond that of duty and affection. I do not say this to hurt you, my dear"—she had hidden her face in her hands—"but I am sure this knowledge of your husband's consideration will not be lost upon you now. Good-bye, my dear. God bless you."

He handed her out of the cab, waited till the street-door had closed on her, and then drove away.

The maid stood staring at her mistress when she had said Mr. Helder was at home.

"In the sitting-room, ma'am, if you please," and she went on to open the door.

"Stop"—Ursula had been too bewildered to plan any mode of action beforehand—"you can go, I want to take Mr. Helder by surprise."

She waited till the maid departed; but the girl was not willing to go, the whole proceeding seemed to her conventional mind quite "out of regular ways."

Ursula opened the door timidly, and then closed it behind her. Till now she had been too much overwrought fully to realise that which she proposed to do. She had realised that she was going home to ask Michael to forgive her, and had felt eager to kneel to him, and entreat him to take her back to his love.

But she had not realised the effect of his presence on herself, and now that she saw him, she had no power to move. Michael sat at the table. His head had been resting on his hand, but he raised it at her entrance. The shade on the lamp beside him concentrated the light on his face, and Ursula felt that he could not make her out as she stood in the far-off darkness.

How ill and worn he looked, and how old his face had grown. She saw in a glance that a sling hung round his neck, although his arm had been withdrawn from it, and she saw the lines that suffering had stamped on his face.

She longs to move—to speak, but she cannot; and now, as she sees him screening his eyes with one hand, and the eagerness that suddenly brightens them, she trembles and stands with bent head, longing to escape.

But Michael gives her no time. He is beside her—he kisses her, and holds her clasped to his heart. As she feels the strong tumultuous throbbing there, Ursula breaks the spell that has held her.

She slips away from Michael and tries to kneel, but her husband sees the movement, and he holds her fast.

"My darling!"—how hungrily she listens to the loved voice—"is it really you?" and then there is a pause in his words. Ursula cannot speak. It seems to her she is in ecstacy as she stands there folded in her husband's arms, and resting her head on his breast.

Presently they sit down together, but Michael seems afraid to loose his hold of her. He cannot yet believe he has his wife again.

At last words come to Ursula.

"How good you are!" she murmurs, "when I am so wicked. If you knew how wicked, you would never, never love me again!" And then her arms creep up round his neck, and she cries quietly.

"I don't know about that," he says, gravely—so gravely that she trembles again. She thinks that after all he only pities her, and she—oh! how she loves him now. "We have both been to blame, perhaps, but you have much to forgive me. Till I read these to-night"—he pointed to some papers on the table—"they are your verses, my child—I did not know all your heart. I did not know how little I had understood or recognised your gifts, nor how much my outward reserve had made you suffer, and you felt my dulness and were too shy to trust me fully with your confidence. Do you forgive my blindness now?"

"Oh, Michael—" But she only begins; he does not let her finish.

"There shall not be any more said. You are here, and I am happy, my darling, if I can only make you happy too."

Ursula looks up—her old sauciness sparkles in her eyes.

"That you certainly cannot," she says. "I am much too happy for even you to make me any happier." Then a tenderness comes into her sweet face, which to Michael seems a new revelation of her

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beauty. It is a look he has never seen in his wife. "Do you know that I am going to try and make you happy now? My own husband," she says, "you need not think about my happiness."

### MY PUNT.

NO one owns a tolerably-sized pond, or lives near an accessible lake, mere, broad, or river, but wishes to be the owner of a boat thereon; and the wish is sure to be the more certainly intense if there are young people in the household. Then, on the other hand, the fact of the young people wanting to paddle forth on their own account makes the caution of the elders the more stringent, and sometimes defeats with irritating success even every legitimate desire of the youngsters to commit themselves to the deep, or shallow. It is tiresome to have no individual interest in the water near you. I except those cases where a boat may be hired. There the sense of ownership, power, and dominion is baulked. It is a grand thing, especially for the youngster, to be owner and master of a craft, and the sense of this ownership and dominion is all the more charming when it is accompanied by that of creation. A boy or lad who makes a boat, and navigates in it, after even the humblest fashion, is conscious of a triumph. He gets a wholesome sense of mastery. He has moved into another world—that of ducks, and maybe, eminently, geese—but he has asserted his authority over the pond or river. He has left the shore—act emblematic of life's greatest efforts—after the exercise of his own skill.

Now, the building of a boat is a deterrent thought. Look at any skiff: see how exquisitely its joints fit; see of how many portions the thing is made; see the lines of beauty that demand observance, and then conceive the conscious depression that a lad feels at the idea of building one; the ribs look too thin for the planks to be bent over them; the keel looks too slight to be the backbone of the structure. How can he, with his clumsy hands and coarse tools dare to cherish the idea of constructing a boat? True, he might make something like a coffin or long box, which, properly pitched, might somehow float him, but he shrinks from so rude a concern. It would not be like a boat. It would be a vehicle for ridicule even if, to some extent, a floating success. So boats, or anything approaching the shape of such fabrics, are left to the hands of experts, and many a lad who, either in his own person or that of his friends, could not command even a punt of his own, lives by the water side, and is dependent wholly on hire or friendly loan for an occasional excursion or row upon the river or lake.

Let me see if I cannot put some of my young friends in the way of producing what shall not only serve the purpose of a boat, but shall look like one. Let me see, too, if I cannot suggest to him a fabric which shall be as safe as, nay, safer than, any skiff he is likely to be able to hire; one, moreover, which he can row after the orthodox method of propulsion; which he can fish from, bathe from, which shall be such as can be hardly upset, and if upset shall be so buoyant as to defy sinkage. I think I can put him in the way of turning out a craft with the aid of ordinary tools, and the materials for which shall be within the resources of the commonest carpenter's yard. There shall be no

difficulty about "ribs," or "knees," or "keel," and, looked at from the bank, the thing shall present the proper appearance of a boat.

Well, after all the boasting, I may as well begin to set down my recipe. I must tell you first how I came to happen upon it. About twenty years ago I built a punt, something after the fashion of one mentioned in that charming book, "Hawker on Shooting." It was built with orthodox "knees." The sides were of elm, rather less than half an inch thick. These were steamed at great pains over a boiling copper, so as to bend aright. The thing was a success for years. It carried three well. I caught many a good basket of fish from it. But in summer, as we had no boat-house in which it could be sheltered from the burning sun, the sides used to crack sorely. We mended these cracks again and again. Year after year the punt made its appearance on our mere, until at last, for divers reasons, it got almost past cure. At length the mere itself dried up, for several years, and the poor punt, full of long slits, was hoisted on the beams of a shed in the cattle yard. There it dried; its cracks gaped wider; you could put your hand into some of them. The idea of its being able ever to float again was abandoned. The punt itself was, indeed, I might say, forgotten. I myself fancied it had probably been broken up and burnt. After a while, however, the mere rose again, and one day I hit upon the ragged corpse of my dear old punt that I had built with so much pains. I forgot where I found it. I know it was rummaged up, I think from under some straw and rubbish in the corner of the barn. We drew it out on the paddock, and the idea of mending it so as to make it mere-worthy had to be abandoned. It was no use trying to mend it. It stood there in the paddock, and the cows used to get into it by turns and stand in apparently hopeless ruminative conjecture as to what the fabric could possibly have been intended for. They stood in it, whisked their tails, and stamped two or three additional holes in the already battered, and originally thin sides. What made them thus get into it, and feel about it with their hoofs, I am at a loss to determine. But it became a favourite standing-place. Still it retained the shape of a boat. Its cutwater—how well I remember shaping it!—stood up. It looked like a boat.

So matters remained, till one day I conceived an idea. The punt was some ten or twelve feet long, and about three feet wide at its widest part. I had a box made two feet wide and eight feet long. Its sides were about the height of those of the punt, so that when I placed it, as I did, in the punt, they were raised about an inch or so above its bulwarks. The box was a common thing, but with ordinary care in its construction, and sufficient pitch in its angles, was quite water-tight. Moreover, it was made of sound elm, inch stuff. I placed it in the dilapidated old punt. There was a space of some six inches, more or less, between its sides and those of the punt. I sent over to the nearest market town, where a cork-cutter lived, and buying a few sacks of cork shavings at tenpence a sack, filled in the space between the sides and ends of the box and the punt. Then we stamped the shavings down as tight as we could, and coarsely boarded them over. Thus the spaces were at once, by a magic touch, converted into the sides of a lifeboat. The rents in the punt's sides were left open, the planks that had started here and

there being quite rudely nailed back into their places. We painted the whole thing, and took it down to the mere. Lo! a lifeboat with an oblong inside, but boat-like structure. It answered admirably. It is impossible to sink it, and it is very steady in the water. Of course it draws several more inches than the original punt did, but perfection is not always attainable.

Let some of my young readers thus make a boat. The part of it in which the rower sits will be simply a long box, made, say, of inch or inch and a half elm. The joints of this must fit, of course, but this is easily managed, and the wood being stout and thick will bear being coarsely caulked. The box can easily be made water-tight. Then let the builder with mere slips of thin wood build around it what is little more than the frame of a boat. The joints of this will be by no means water-tight. All the better. They are not intended to be so. They are meant to let the water in. Then the spaces between the sides and ends of the box and the rude frame of the boat must be filled in tight with cork shavings, which are very cheap. Boards nailed over this space will complete the fabric. The builder will find himself possessed of a boat according to his fancy some twelve, fourteen, or sixteen feet long. He will find himself well accommodated in the long box that really forms the part of the boat that holds him. The thing is easily done. The result is excellent. It cannot be sunk, and is not easy to be turned over, since by the nature of things, as he sits down in the bottom he has cork floats on either side, and before and behind him.

One point must be remembered. The sides of the included box must be higher than those of the boat frame. Thus water spilt on the boarded spaces runs outward and not into the box. I cannot give more details here. Any lad with an eye towards carpentering will see easily how the thing is to be managed. A flat bottom will of course have to be provided. It can be roughly held together, and will be of the shape he wishes the boat to assume. If his box is eight feet long and two wide, his boat may be fifteen, sixteen, or eighteen, pointed at each end. The result will be like a partially decked boat, one with a hold, or room, eight feet by two. The spaces between the sides of the box and the boat-frame being filled with cork, the more easily the water enters it the better. The builder can make the sides of splines less than half an inch thick and a quarter of an inch apart; these are more easily bent than a whole board, and almost any nails will do, and any wood, deal, however, would perhaps be best.

On a retrospect, let me try to give more details. Take three planks eleven inches wide, lay them side by side and fasten them roughly with cross boards. Shape them, pointed at each end into the flat bottom of a boat; then put a cutwater, upright or sloping as the builder pleases, at each end, and having made his box let him lay and fasten it on the bottom. Its corners should reach the edges of the bottom of the boat; thus there will be six inches to spare on either side in the middle, and a triangular space at each end. First take two splines and nail them to the cutwater. These splines will be bent out by the corner of the box, and give the boat-like shape he wants. A few uprights between these splines and the bottom boards will give him "knees" on which to bend and nail the slips which form the sides of the boat, these need barely touch each other; then fill in

the spaces with cork shavings, board them over, paint, and the life-boat is complete. Thowls may be easily fixed on the boarded spaces. An appearance of lightness and elegance may be given by making the cutwaters slope a little outwards. The thing when built will draw some five or six inches of water, but that is no matter if the sides are made about eleven inches high. Let the sides of the box be a little higher than those of the boat, so that, as I have said, water spilt on the boarded spaces will run outward and not enter the space where the rower sits.

One more thing is to be remarked. A boat thus built will not have its sides split by the sun, they will be protected from the mischance by the moist cork.

Since writing the above I have found a new power, or property, in my punt. It will sail. Our mere is now about twelve acres in extent, so that we have room to test this. In old days when the punt was young and buoyant, drawing little water, I tried her with a sail, and she would only drive before the wind. Now she sinks so much deeper in the water that we can fairly beat up to windward. I use a simple lateen or felucca sail like a jib, the upper side of the sail being carried by a pole which is at the same time yard and mast, and is fixed in a "step" in the bows. I sailed the punt in the stiff January gales, and she behaved splendidly, being very steady in the water.

I know, however, from the accepted principles of "lateral motion," that if her sides were less boat-like and made perpendicular and parallel, as in the recipe I have given, she would hold up in the wind still better. If the punt were used chiefly to *sail*, the bows should be pointed, but the stern square; the perpendicular and parallel side acts like a keel, and great stability is thus secured; but such a square-sided and sterned point would be less "boat-like" than the other, and would not be quite so pleasant to "row."

#### THE ITALIAN ORGAN-MEN.

AMONG the familiars of our London and suburban streets, few have more claim to our interest than the organ-men, not only for the patience with which they endure their wandering manner of life, but for their strong love of country and kindred, which is one great reason why they leave their sunny land for this country of fogs and cold.

This appears a paradox; but the pain of absence is courageously borne because they are sustained by one great hope, which is, that by self-denial in every shape they may be enabled to save sufficient money to return to their beloved country and purchase the small plot of ground which will make them proprietors in a modest way. There they will build their little homestead, plant their Indian corn for the Polenta, and with a vine and a goat or two will live, and live comfortably too.

The contadini of Piedmont, and her sister in pastoral beauty, green Savoy, were the first who took the bold resolve of leaving their native mountains to seek better fortune in other lands. Children, principally boys, were sent across the mountains to the more populous towns of Italy, an ancient hurdy-gurdy, a guitar, or a tambourine, being their whole stock-in-trade; and with these the brown-legged, bright little fellows would sing and dance the money

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out of the pockets of the public, mothers especially looking with favour on the merry little exiles.

But although the wanderings of the children were confined to their own country, the young men who were anxious to do something beyond the narrow circle in which they moved, went first to Paris. The grinding organ, then a very poor one, was a novelty there, and they did fairly. Gaining courage from success, London was at last reached, and the Italian organ-men became an institution. Afterwards there came the time when tyranny and despotism was at its worst, and many left their homes and their families to gain their bread by carrying an organ, believing that those they left behind them would be safer in their absence. But with what sorrowing hearts these poor fellows left their beloved mountains and valleys, and how tenderly they clung to the remembrance of those they left behind, only those who know their everyday life associations can tell. The letters of sons in England to fathers and mothers in Italy, to the betrothed wife, the sister or brother, are often marvels of simple truth and love; and although not always written with their own hands, they are dictated in such a poetic strain of tenderness that it would be a hard heart that could change even a word.

It is this large-heartedness which brings into life all that poetry and love of music and song which makes the Italian organ-man so often burst into a wild improvisation, as the air which he is playing—and be sure it is one of his own country's—recalls to his mind the pleasant land of his birth. Its beauties form a sort of living fount of joy in his heart which flows in a rivulet of sweet words that once heard are seldom forgotten. One man in particular almost always sings the following words, with but little difference, to the Italian air "La mia Letizia" :—

LUNGI DA TE PATRIA BEATA.

" Far from thee, my beloved country, everything  
Seems dark. When, oh when shall I see thy green  
Mountains again, or wander o'er thy green valleys ?  
Ah me ! I well remember when each day brought  
New delights, because enjoyed with thee, sweet Nice !  
Oh fields in flowers dressed, so odorous and fair,  
Fit to deck Venus in her beauty,  
I salute ye with these tears !  
How well my heart remembers the rivulet by which  
I stood to take my farewell look of those loved scenes,  
And in which I saw reflected my real grief !  
How often have we wandered along its green banks,  
Oh Nice, and listened to the nightingale's love plaint,  
Thou and I, sweet Nice ! thou and I ! "

In some instances the voices are fine and deeply-toned, and borrow a great charm from the emotion which memory gives them. When met together as they often are, particularly on the arrival or departure of friends, it is no uncommon thing when speaking of Italy (*La nostra cara Italia*, our dear Italy), that some one among them begins the refrain of a popular canzonette, or imitates a mountain cry, plaintive and melodious, calling up a picture dear and, oh ! how well remembered, which makes their dark eyes brighten with tears, as scenes of their pleasant land and its dear ones who are waiting there arise in their minds.

Although Italy is now free, thank God, from the Alps to the Adriatic, men from Piedmont, Parma, Piacenza, Lucca, and Como still come to England to make money. With those who are established here the present paper has no concern, and we will there-

fore only remark that many are rich men. But it is worthy of note that men from these different countries of Italy most generally carry on each their special employment. Thus from Piedmont, Parma, and Piacenza, are organ-men; from Lucca, plaster-cast makers; whilst Como sends the most deft hands for barometers, looking-glasses, and their ornamental frames. The brotherhood which exists between all of these Italians, and their care for each other's interests, is great. Should there be those who come from the same mountain, hamlet, or valley, it is beautiful to see the anxiety with which they hasten to tell the news when a letter from any of their relatives has arrived, and should they be unable to read, how quickly they run to another who can.

The Italian organ-man comes to England now with a lighter heart than formerly, because when the wished-for sum is gained—that is, when he has walked his number of miles, and the day at last has come when he is really and truly going to "my Italy" (it is always thus they speak), he has not the fear of losing that which he has so hardly earned.

From the mountain villages in Piedmont those who were leaving generally did so in company, four or five together, and although it was anything but an occasion of rejoicing, the friends of each tried to make them hopeful, and talked of what they would do on their return before they were *en voyage*. On these occasions the men who are leaving meet their friends at the "shrine" (*capitello*), which is the little pigeon-house-like structure at the beginning of the mountain road, from whence they are to start on their journey. These relations and friends are generally *pastori e pastorelle* (shepherds and shepherdesses), who bring with them, the men their piva, and the girls their tambourine and cembalo, singing to this rude but effective music one of their favourite mountain songs, written by their pastoral poet Di Floriano, the verses being sung by men and girls alternately. The following is one of the most popular :—

" I PASTORI.

" Addio, vaghe pastorelle,  
Questo bel clima lasciam,  
Nostri passi noi portiam  
Sotto straniere stelle,  
Per anni tre e'l nostro cor,  
Senza piacer e senza amor.

" Addio, beautiful maidens  
(shepherdesses),  
We leave our beloved country  
For the stranger's, where for  
years our  
Unhappy fate takes us ;  
'Neath other skies less fair  
we shall mourn  
Our absence from thee,  
Without pleasure and with-  
out love !

" LE PASTORELLE.

" Addio, amici nostri, e frati,  
Addio, amante veritier ;  
Riportate i cuori sincer  
Cui, da chi tu sei amati  
Noi vivremo senza cor ;  
Senza piacer, senza amor."

" Farewell, friends and  
brothers ! and thou our  
true lover,  
Farewell ! never doubt but  
that we shall return to  
You with faithful hearts,  
because,  
Whilst parted from you, re-  
member that  
We live only in the hope of  
our return, and until then,  
Without pleasure and with-  
out love ! "

Thus, first one and then the other gives *animo*, as they say, and the angel of hope helps each to bear the

pain of parting. Perhaps none feel so much as these simple mountaineers the pangs of separating, from their parents particularly, for the respectful obedience to parental law shown by all classes of Italians is something very pleasant to see. Indeed, some persons have been known to smile when they have heard stalwart men say, "I don't think my father or my mother would like me to do so and so."

The letter of one of these robust, broad-shouldered Italians to his father and mother on the birthday of the latter, has for its beautifully-expressed feelings never been forgotten by the one whom the poor fellow asked, with many blushes at his incapacity—it was before he could use a pen—to write it for him. The letter ran thus:—

"Mia diletta e respettata Madre (My beloved and respected Mother),—When they told me that there was a letter arrived for me, my heart sung (literal), for I knew it was from thee, and when the kind friend who writes these words read it to me I had no voice to speak my joy that thou and my much respected father are well, for which I thank—I was going to say, the Virgin, but my friend has taught me rather to say, I thank God. I try to practise all the virtues I so well remember as belonging to my parents, and to do what they would have me; but my heart is heavy when I think of the time that must pass before I see thee again, and I lose heart, and have weak thoughts of coming to my country before the time. Forgive me, but I am all day, all night, dreaming of my return. This country almost frightens me, 'tis so *triste*—so large, it seems the streets have no end. Wert thou here, oh my mother, I should be stronger to bear, to suffer. I cannot say more, my heart is shedding tears. Receive the paper I send with all love and respect—there will be more soon. I think I see thee and my father when he brings this letter and says, 'Tis from Serafino.' I am thy most loving and obedient son.

"Nota bene.—Angelo M—i, who brings these my words, also brings an English shawl—'tis to enfold my mother in when the snow falls. Addio, may God bless thee."

As there were four others who lived in the same hamlet, their names were written on the other side of the paper, thus: "Onofrio G—, amore e tanti bacci alla mia figlia e l'anima della mia vita, mia moglie," "Stefano I—, non dementicare tuo caro figlio, mille bacci," and so on; so that when the letter had been read at home, it would be carried, with how much pride may be well imagined, to the different houses in the *borgo*, until all those concerned had read their names and the different remembrances contained.

From the same part of Piedmont there are in London at the present time two little boys, brothers, one of whom is blind. It is a charming sight to see the care Achilli takes of his sightless brother, how tenderly he leads him, and when crossing the street how carefully he puts him between himself and another person who is also going the same way, so that if danger comes he, and not the object of his care, would suffer. The boy is too small to carry an organ but he has one of those long-backed grinders called a *pianoforte* organ, and sometimes a hurdy-gurdy. Another of these poor wanderers who go up and down the town is a woman. She is Neapolitan, and is not so cultivated as are the Piedmontese. She is very dark, and far from good-looking, and her voice not sweet. But to the Piedmontese who listen to her all this is nothing. Why? She sings in the Piedmontese dialect. It is enough that they hear the words that are seldom or ever heard out of their country, for it is a mixture of old French and Latin

combined. But it speaks to the hearts of her compatriots, and before her song is over, from her listeners—for they come round her like bees—she has received the pence of those almost as poor as herself. With all her plainness there is a certain kindly look in her dark eyes when she nods and smiles, showing her white teeth, which, with the white handkerchief on her head, and her red shawl round her shoulders, gives her a very striking appearance.

It would puzzle any one who had not lived in Piedmont to comprehend the words that *Juditta* sings. Let them tell their oddity for themselves:—

"Ah! s'i avvi tra rostra mur, " Should there seek refuge  
Un gentil grovin pastor 'neath your roof  
Che de tuit peni pi fort, sicur A young and gentle shepherd  
L'e me amis; rendimele; (pastor),  
J'en so amor, a la mia fe. Whose every action breathes  
of goodness and love,  
Remember there is only one  
like him;  
He has my love and I have  
his faith.

"Se a sta cito e dous en vis " If he is gentle and sweet in  
Sa con lai anteneri; look,  
Se mai senza fe arrossi, And he is also tender and  
La sua groza a mostra l'ris; true,  
L'e me amis; rendimele, If the joy of his smiles should  
J'en amor a la mia fe." make you blush,  
Remember well, 'tis he  
Who has my love, and I his  
faith."

That Italy and the Italians—they are all Italians now—are greatly indebted to the Piedmontese there can be no manner of doubt. The warlike spirit which made them fight against oppression in every shape lives with them from their soldier king and his gallant sons down to the lowest soldier. The Piedmontese expression *non e Mica*, tells how great and self-sacrificing actions are respected, and how their example is held, even by a mannerism of speech, before the people's eyes as something never to be forgotten. In the year 1745, when Turin was attacked by the French, the citadel, a small fortress towards the southern entrance of the city, was garrisoned and, it was said, mined! It became patent that if this citadel were taken the rest would be easy, consequently the French directed their energies and their guns towards the unfortunate construction. Among the soldiers of the garrison was a certain sergeant, by name Mica, who conceived the bold resolve of saving his beloved Turin at the certain risk of his own life. He had obtained information upon which he could rely that the French would attack the citadel at a certain hour the next day. Mica laid his plans, and allowed the French to come far enough to cause a panic in the ranks of the Piedmontese soldiers, there being but a small number, a kind of lull in the hostilities having taken place. Taking upon himself to order those remaining to retire out of danger, Mica was seen to kneel on the entrance of the door, through which he descended to the vaults, and to kiss the cross of his sword. After a few minutes the French, advancing under the cover of the rapidly-increasing darkness, thought, with their usual facility of believing themselves all in all, that everything favoured their enterprise. And so it did, but not in the way they imagined. The soldiers



THE SAVOYARD.

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had advanced with their heads held high in the prospect of an easy victory, when just as their gallant young colonel was cheering on his men, a rumbling noise, and then a sound like a hundred thunderclaps in one, and fortress, soldiers, and, alas! poor Mica—true-hearted Mica—were all blown into the air! To save his beloved Turin from falling into the hands of the French, he had retired to the vaults, and, firing the mine when he saw from his post of observation that it could be done, he sacrificed himself for the country he so loved, and perished with those who sought to make it their own.

One of the people's poets, who lived and died believing that there was no nation on earth which had given birth to a "Mica," has thus celebrated his noble deed:—

## LITERAL TRANSLATION.

"A word for the brave! for him who fell on Piedmont's fair plain!  
Fathers and mothers, sisters and lovers, join in the plaint for Mica  
Self-slain! self-immolated for Piedmont's gain!"

The blank verse poem goes on to tell how he was—"Grand and true-hearted, and yielded his life that the mountains and valleys he loved for their beauty and green softness might not be pressed by the feet of the stranger," and so on with all the heroic feelings such a deed would call forth in the minds of a people fond of their hero.

Many stories equally true and romantic might be related which would appear almost too high-flown and full of illusion to please English taste; but it is none the less true that to the keeping up all these old time customs, the patriarchal manners and dear delights of simple country life, to the beauty and virtue of an existence where all these are paramount, the organ-man often owes his ability to maintain a simplicity of character which keeps him from the evils of the great city wherein for a time his lot is cast.

The picturesque Savoyard has his place also in English literature. We may add, as expressing the love of home, one of Henry Kirke White's sweet lays.

## THE SAVOYARD'S RETURN.

Oh! yonder is the well-known spot,  
My dear, my long-lost native home!  
Oh! welcome is yon little cot,  
Where I shall rest, no more to roam!  
Oh! I have travelled far and wide,  
O'er many a distant foreign land;  
Each place, each province I have tried,  
And sung and danced my saraband;  
But all their charms could not prevail  
To steal my heart from yonder vale.  
  
Of distant climes the false report  
Allured me from my native land,  
It bade me rove—my sole support  
My cymbals and my saraband.  
The woody dell, the hanging rock,  
The chamois skipping o'er the heights;  
The plain adorned by many a flock,  
And oh! the thousand more delights  
That grace yon dear beloved retreat,  
Have backward won my weary feet.  
  
Now safe returned, with wandering tired,  
No more my little home I'll leave;  
And many a tale of what I've seen  
Shall while away the winter's eve.

Oh! I have wandered far and wide,  
O'er many a distant foreign land;  
Each place, each province I have tried,  
And sung and danced my saraband;  
But all their charms could not prevail  
To steal my heart from yonder vale.

C. DI T.

## DREAMS AND DREAMING.

## XI.—DREAMS RECORDED IN THE BIBLE.

As a supplement to the series of papers on "Dreams and Dreaming," we quote the following chapter from a work long out of print, "On Dreams in their Mental and Moral Aspects," by the venerable John Sheppard, of Frome, who has kindly sent his copy for making the extract.

A thousand juggleries or illusions cannot prove that there have been no real miracles: and millions of futile dreams, with thousands of fictitious ones, cannot disprove that there have been dreams indicative of divine prescience, and kindly ordained by God's providence. Rather, as the strength of superstition shows it to be a graft on that real sentiment of religion which is implanted and rooted in our nature—so do the prevalent impressions of mankind about dreams—while in great part erroneous—afford some presumption that dreams have been at times divinely sent and fulfilled. We have, however, direct Scriptural proof of this; and in proceeding to the investigation of such dreams as appear to have been in some special sense providentially ordained—we shall have first to consider the revealed or implied uses of those recorded in the Holy Bible.

I would premise, that we find general declarations there as to the divinely directive or warning or prophetic character of some dreams, and as to the illusion and deceit which characterise others. Thus to Aaron and Miriam—"If there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known to him in a vision—will speak unto him in a dream." Thus to Jeremiah,—"I have heard what the prophets said that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.—The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" And in a letter to the captives in Babylon they are solemnly enjoined, "Let not your prophets and your diviners deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed." Such false dreams and dreamers, it should be observed, were denounced chiefly as aiming to pervert the Hebrews to idol worship. But Moses himself, whose law unsparingly condemns them, distinctly records—as other sacred writers also do—various dreams of divine origin. These may be in some sort classed, according to the end or use which appears in them severally to be more specific or prominent.

Some were evidently ordered for the immediate protection of the servants of God; as those of the king of Gerar, which procured the rescue of Sarah; that of the Syrian shepherd Laban, which deterred him from severities against Jacob; and that which warned the Eastern Magi against the perfidy of Herod. Some were for the special encouragement of good men in the undertakings assigned to them. Thus Jacob, in a lonely, perilous journey, was cheered by the dream of the mystic ladder and the promise uttered

from its summit; and again, when, in his later years, he and his were invited into Egypt, the Almighty spoke to him "in the visions of the night," and encouraged him to go. Thus the dreams of Pharaoh's household, with Joseph's interpretation of these, and the subsequent dreams of the monarch, brought the young Hebrew out of durance, and procured him power to benefit both his own kindred and the whole Egyptian people.

The singular dream of the Midianite soldier—that a barley cake had overturned a tent—interpreted by his comrade as foreshowing the victory of Gideon—was received by that rustic leader as a fresh token of heavenly aid; and animated him, with his little band, to assail and scatter a mighty host. The dream of Solomon, in which he acknowledged his own insufficiency, entreated wisdom from above, and received a gracious answer, was adapted to strengthen him in the difficulties of his opening reign, and in fidelity to the Most High.

So when, many ages after, St. Paul at Corinth was divinely addressed "in the night by a vision," and enjoined fearlessly to proclaim the truth, new energy was doubtless given to his efforts in that corrupt city. And a previous "vision in the night" at Troas, of a Macedonian entreating "help," had so vividly impressed him as a divine call that it prompted his first sailing to the coasts of Europe.

A primary object of some dreams, with their interpretation and fulfilment, appears to have been that of impressing heathen sovereigns and their subjects with reverence for the true God and respect for his servants. Pharaoh's dreams, as interpreted (even before they were fulfilled), had this effect. He said, of Joseph, "Can we find as this a man in whom the spirit of God is?" and made him his first minister.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the terrible image, and Daniel's *discovery* and exposition of it, forced the proud king to own, "Of a truth your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets."

Several dreams were of a scope distinctly prophetic, and were signally verified in after years; sometimes even in distant ages.

Thus Joseph's—of the sheaves making obeisance to his sheaf, and of the heavenly luminaries doing him homage—must have strongly indicated to his family, after that strange rise to dignity and power which followed, the divine preordination of his lot and theirs.

The earlier vision of Abram, when a "deep sleep fell upon" him, and the long bondage and wonderful deliverance of his descendants were in that state foretold to the patriarch, had the same instructiveness for after generations.

Daniel's "dream and visions of his head upon his bed," interpreted, during their continuance, by one to whom in vision he applied, were prophetic of the great revolutions of empire, the rise and fall of Anti-christ, and the final triumph of pure Christianity. The first dream of Nebuchadnezzar embraced the same objects.

Some appear to have been designed simply for the forcible and solemn impression of religious truth; as that which Eliphaz relates to Job: "A thing was secretly brought to me, in thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men:—an image was before mine eyes—silence—and I heard a voice,—Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" With

this the language of Elihu to Job remarkably corresponds:—"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." Job himself also speaks of this, though in an impatient spirit, as among the methods of divine chastisement.

"Thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions." I would here remark, that there seems no good ground for the distinction made by the learned Calmet, or his editor, between dreams and visions, as if the latter had been more clear or important than the divinely-ordained dreams. That all visions were not dreams is obvious: witness that of the burning bush; and of the angel who rescued Peter; with others. But all divinely ordained dreams might, I apprehend, be termed visions. They had, no doubt, an emphasis and vividness which entitled them to that name; and accordingly we have found in Job the terms "vision of the night," "visions," "visions of the night," employed in close conjunction with "deep sleep" and "dreams"; and Daniel, writing in Chaldee, describes his "dream" as, in other words, the "visions of his head upon his bed." So, when he related, many years before, the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, he thus addressed the astonished king:—"Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these." The terms, in both cases, appear used, in the original, as synonyms; or one expresses the state of dreaming, the other the objects presented in a dream. And, let it be remembered, this dream of Daniel consisted of the four great beasts emerging from the sea, representing four great monarchies—the Ancient of days, the flaming throne, the Son of man, and his universal sway.

And to the prior dream of the king of Babylon it was a parallel, shadowing out the same events. Any predictions, therefore, more vast in scope or momentous in import than these DREAMS conveyed, the scripture hardly offers. I remark, further, that some of the dreams mentioned, while it has been attempted to class them according to what may seem their primary object, have in fact *combined several* of the uses enumerated. We may take, as the fullest instance, that of Nebuchadnezzar, last referred to, concerning the "terrible image," and "the stone that smote" it. That dream, with its discovery to Daniel in a correspondent "night vision," raised the young Hebrew to be a "great man" and "ruler"; procuring, of course, his powerful influence for the many thousand captives of his nation. Thus, likewise, he and they were strengthened (as subsequent heroism evinces) in faithfulness to the worship of their God. The effect of these same dreams on the heathen monarch has been already pointed out; and the far reaching comprehension of their predictive scope has just been noticed, in referring to Daniel's parallel dream during the reign of Belshazzar. Each has wonderfully displayed the divine foreknowledge, and attested the inspiration of the prophet.

Such testimonies must needs assure Christians, that it pleased God in ancient times to make dreams signally instrumental to the designs of his providence. And as for the last-mentioned (recorded in the book of Daniel), I invite those who are not Christians—but possess intelligent and inquiring minds—to study and *explain* the far-extending prescience which they manifest.

The dreams which ministered to the guardianship

of our Saviour's infancy, form a class quite peculiar, to which there will be here no occasion for advertizing; but with them may be mentioned that which so deeply affected the wife of Pilate, and which we may well believe strengthened that governor's purpose to avouch the innocence of the wonderful person accused before him.

### NATURAL HISTORY ANECDOTES.

#### REMARKABLE SAGACITY OF AN ELEPHANT.

THE following anecdote was related by Major Brown, of the 40th regiment, to the late Mr. Stephen Round, of New Windsor, Berks. During the siege of Pondicherry, in the East Indies, by the British army, when M. Lally was governor, there were in the French garrison several war elephants, all of which except one died from the scarcity of provisions, and the survivor would have shared the fate of his companions but for his uncommon sagacity, which rendered him a favourite with every one and the object of general admiration. This animal, in the absence of his keeper, was one day amusing himself with his chain in an open part of the town, when a man who had committed a theft, and was pursued by a great number of people, despairing of all other means of safety, ran for protection under the elephant. Apparently delighted with the poor wretch's confidence, the creature instantly faced about and met the crowd, erected his trunk, and threw his chain in the air, as is the manner of these animals when engaged with the enemy, and became so furious in the defence of the criminal that, notwithstanding all the gentle arts made use of by the surrounding multitude, neither they, nor even his mahout, or driver, to whom he was fondly attached, and who was sent for to manage him, could prevail with him to give up the malefactor. The contest had continued for above three hours, when at length the governor, hearing the strange account of it, came to the spot, and was so much pleased with the generous perseverance of the honest quadruped, that he yielded to the elephant's interposition and pardoned the criminal. The poor man, in an ecstasy of gratitude, testified his acknowledgments by kissing and embracing the proboscis of his kind benefactor, who was apparently so sensible of what had happened that, laying aside all his former violence, he became perfectly tame and gentle in an instant, and suffered his keeper to conduct him away without the smallest resistance.

#### TAME SNAKES.

The following letter appeared in the "Times" after a report in the police courts of a complaint from neighbours of the snake-tamers:—

"I happen to know the gentleman and lady against whom a complaint has been made because of the snakes they keep, and I should like to give a short account of my first visit to them.

"Mr. M.—, after we had talked for a little time, asked if I had any fear of snakes, and after a timid 'No, not very' from me, he produced out of a cupboard a large boa constrictor, a python, and several small snakes, which at once made themselves at home on the writing-table among pens, ink, and books. I was at first a good deal startled, especially when the two large snakes coiled round and round my friend, and began to notice me with their bright

eyes and forked tongues; but soon finding how tame they were I ceased to feel frightened. After a short time Mr. M.— expressed a wish to call Mrs. M.— and left me with the boa deposited on an arm-chair. I felt a little queer when the animal began gradually to come near, but the entrance of my host and hostess, followed by two charming little children, put me at my ease again. After the first interchange of civilities she and the children went at once to the boa, and, calling it by the most endearing names, allowed it to twine itself most gracefully round about them. I sat talking for a long time, lost in wonder at the picture before me. Two beautiful little girls with their charming mother sat before me with a boa constrictor (as thick round as a small tree) twining playfully round the lady's waist and neck, and forming a kind of turban round her head, expecting to be petted and made much of like a kitten. The children over and over again took its head in their hands, and kissed its mouth, pushing aside its forked tongue in doing so. The animal seemed much pleased, but kept turning its head continually towards me with a curious gaze, until I allowed it to nestle its head for a moment up my sleeve. Nothing could be prettier than to see this splendid serpent coiled all round Mrs. M.— while she moved about the room, and when she stood to pour out our coffee. He seemed to adjust his weight so nicely, and every coil with its beautiful marking was relieved by the black velvet dress of the lady. It was long before I could make up my mind to end the visit, and I returned soon after with a friend (a distinguished M.P.) to see my snake-taming acquaintance again.

"I am sure he did not think there was any necessity for either law or legislature to interfere.

"It seems to me mere prejudice when snakes are not venomous to abhor them as we do. They are intelligent and harmless, perfectly clean, with no sort of smell, make no kind of noise, and move about far more gracefully than lapdogs or other pets. These seemed very obedient, and remained in their cupboard when told to do so.

"Some time ago Mr. and Mrs. M.— were away for six weeks, and left the boa in charge of a keeper at the Zoo. The poor reptile moped, slept, and refused to be comforted, but when his master and mistress appeared, he sprang upon them with delight, coiling himself round them, and showing every symptom of intense delight.

"The children are entirely devoted to their 'darling Cleo,' as they call the snake, and they smiled when I asked if they were never frightened of it."

#### A JOURNEY WITH OTTERS.

Mr. Frank Buckland, in "Land and Water," gives a characteristic account of a journey with otters.

"Mr. M. Dunn, of Mevagissey, Cornwall, was kind enough to inform me that he knew where there were two young otters, about half-grown, for sale. They had just been taken from the mother. Knowing the very great interest that had been taken by the public in the live seal, I immediately resolved to purchase the otters for the Brighton Aquarium, as otters, if kindly treated, will soon become tame, and when fishing in the water swim in a most elegant and graceful manner; I therefore telegraphed back immediately to Mr. Dunn that I would take them. They came in a large hamper, with some straw to lie on. On opening the basket I found the little things

curled up like the 'Babes in the Wood,' and their pretty little bright eyes looked up at me imploringly, as much as to say, 'Please don't hurt us; we are dreadfully frightened, hungry, and sleepy, and we have lost our mother.' Mr. Dunn having informed me that they were very thirsty animals, I at once put into their basket a soap-basin of water, and they drank greedily of it. I then sent for some sprats, and was delighted to find that they would take them out of my hand. Altogether, they ate nearly half a pound of sprats between them. Not willing to trust to anybody to take my prizes to Brighton, I determined to see them safely there myself. A four-wheel cab not being available at the moment, I put them in their basket between the doors of a hansom. I was delayed some little time at my office, leaving the otters in the cab outside. On arriving at Victoria Station, after taking my ticket, I looked at the otters to see how they were getting on. I was horrified to find one lying on his back, apparently dead, while the other looked by no means so fresh as I could have wished. I had a bit of a shindy with the porter, who wanted to put my basket in the guard's van. If this had been done, of course both the otters would probably have perished between London and Brighton. I therefore appealed to his humanity, showed him the poor little otters, and asked him where I could find a fire; he then very kindly showed me into the waiting-room, and lighted the burners of the gas-stove. I at once put the basket with the otters on the top of the gas-stove, and turned up the gas as high as I dared without burning the animals: still the poor sick otter did not move, but the other otter got better. I then sent the man to explain the circumstances to the superintendent, and to get his leave to take the basket with me into a first-class carriage. The superintendent gave me leave, and my fellow-passengers were exceedingly civil about it.

"Just as the train was starting, a man came by with foot-warmers. I immediately procured one, and placed the otters in their basket upon it. Seeing that the man had another warmer to spare, I took that also into the carriage, and, opening the lid of the basket, carefully slid it down between the two little animals. I then left them alone. When we got to Croydon I examined them again, and was much pleased to find that the healthiest of the two was lying full length half asleep on the foot-warmer, while the other one opened his eyes, of which I was glad, for I really thought he was dead. One ate some sprats, which I carried in my pocket, whilst the sickly one would not look at them. Feeling sure he wanted more warmth still, I considered what I should do for a wrap for him. Having no rug or great-coat, I was for the moment puzzled what to do. After thinking for a minute I recollect I had luckily got on my sealskin waistcoat, so at once took it off and covered him over with it. Both the poor little animals then went fast asleep, and I determined not to disturb them any more till I arrived at the Aquarium. Mr. Lawler met me at the station at Brighton, and we jumped into the cab without looking at the otters.

"A few minutes after we left the station I felt something nip my leg. Looking down into the basket, I found that it was empty—in fact, both otters were loose in the cab. My foot-warmers had in fact been so effectual that I had made them *too* lively. I told Lawler to keep perfectly quiet and do nothing, and even if he was bitten not to move his legs. The

otters soon came out from under the seat and looked impudently at us. I did not care what they did—I was so pleased to find they were alive. When we arrived at the back entrance of the Aquarium, I asked Lawler to get me a small landing-net. I then passed the cushions of the cab out of the window to the man, who seemed somewhat astonished at the contents of the basket. I had intended to have caught them with the landing-net; so I shut up the windows, and prepared for an otter fight in the cab. I had not long to wait before I saw the tail of one of the otters projecting from under the seat. Recollecting that pictures of otter-hunting sometimes represented the huntsman as 'tailing the otter,' I thought I would try if I could accomplish the feat. So, watching my opportunity, I caught the otter by the tail, gave him a twist, and dropped him into the basket like a shot. He snapped and snarled dreadfully, and tried to turn round to bite me, but I was too quick for him, and the lid of the basket was down in a moment. The other otter then climbed up on to the seat of the cab, and seemed to be looking for his comrade. I opened the lid of the basket, and he seemed inclined to go in. While he was making up his mind, I held up the lid with one hand, and gave him a push with the other, and in he tumbled; so I had got the two all right. When inside the Aquarium, Mr. Lawler and myself gave them some more sprats and another drink of water. We then shut them up in their basket, and put them by the engine furnace, and I was glad to learn by telegram next morning that they were in perfect health."

A week later Mr. Buckland, in "Land and Water," wrote:—"I have since heard that the sickly otter is dead, the other has been sent to the Zoological till a proper den is provided for him at Brighton. Mr. Dunn sent me the following interesting account of the capture of these two otters:

"The otters I sent you were caught a few miles to the west of this place by two brothers called Groove, fishermen belonging to Goranhaven. They are persons well known to me, and on whose word you may rely. As the story of the capture of the otters is rather interesting, I send it for your perusal. On the morning of the 4th instant, the men were rowing along the sea-shore in a small boat, going to their crab-grounds. When off a high cliff from which in olden times stones of near a hundred tons in each had slipped down into the sea, and at the time of their passing were half covered with water, forming here and there miniature sea inlets and harbours, and causing the sea in these places to be comparatively smooth; in one of these nooks thus formed, the men saw these two young otters taking their morning bath. On the approach of the boat the otters instantly made for the shore, and as quickly hid themselves under a jutting rock. One of the men immediately landed, and after some considerable difficulty, as he found their teeth very sharp, got hold of them and brought them into the boat, and tied them fast with a strong cord. When these youngsters found their liberty gone, they set up a very shrill noise—whistling would hardly express the name of the sound. The men were about to resume their work when, more than a hundred and fifty yards away along the coast, they saw the dam making directly for them. The men lay on their oars to notice the effects of the screams of the young on the parent otter, expecting the mother would show the white feather when she saw the features of her

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adversaries. But with *her* there was no doubt or hesitation. She swam boldly up to the boat, and when she saw the men she made some strange defiant noises and grimaces, struck at the boat and tried to climb into her, but the height out of the water prevented the act being accomplished. Three times the otter made the attempt to mount the sides of the boat, and each time failed. The men, having other work in prospect, struck her down with an oar and stunned her, when, drawing her on board, there was only just a sign of life, and to be on the safe side they tied her feet with a rope and proceeded on their journey. In less than half an hour the otter revived, bit the rope in two that held her, and fairly attacked the men; but they were too much for her. She manifested such a ferocious temper that they had to kill her outright, and she died fighting to the last for her young. Her skin is now held by the men, and may be bought for the market price. The young ones, after a few hours, took kindly to their captivity, and by the next morning readily ate fish, drank water, and in three days appeared none the worse for their capture.'

"I am rather sorry," adds Mr. Buckland, "that the affectionate and plucky mother otter was killed. It would have been a grand thing if she could have been caught alive. It is very unusual for an otter to attack men; they are very shy things."

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#### THE EDUCATION OF THE BLIND.

JUST opposite the Railway Station, Upper Norwood, that is, just under the shadow of the Crystal Palace, is a row of houses, apparently intended for shops, known to the neighbours as Paxton Terrace. In this terrace two or three houses are joined together, and thus united they form what is called a Normal College and Academy of Music for the Blind. It is of this place I would write. There is nothing more wonderful or more deeply interesting to the benevolent mind to be seen inside the Palace. Externally, as you may suppose, the College for the Blind is a very unpretending affair: considering what are its aims, and what are its actual results, it is almost too much so. Building costly architectural institutions, spending money on bricks and mortar which might clothe the naked or feed the hungry, or instruct the ignorant or save the perishing, is one of the failings of our age; but at Norwood the college is only in its infancy, and at present more thought is properly bestowed upon the pupils than upon the outside of the institution in which they are placed. As it is, you would scarce take it to be a college at all. Yet such it is, and if you did, as the writer did once, knock at the wrong door, perhaps a young lady will open it, and if it be after school hours you may find yourself in the midst of a bevy of laughing girls, who look so well, answer your questions so intelligently, have such a cheerful air, that you can scarce fancy they are blind. Alas! they are such, and have most of them been such from their very birth. In the United Kingdom it is calculated there are 30,000 such. It is scarce possible to conceive a sadder fate than theirs. For them earth, with its forms of beauty, almost exists in vain; on their dark horizon no sun ever dawns; to them the heavens declare no glory, and the fir-

mament showeth forth no handiwork. Of the changes of the seasons—of the plumage of the bird—of the bloom of the flower—of the faces of those they love—of all the exquisite enjoyment which comes to us by means of the organ of sight—they have not and cannot have the remotest idea. Nor is this all. Oftimes their hard lot has been rendered harder by the poverty which has been in too many cases the inevitable result of this physical infirmity. They have been unable to push their own way in the world, and they have been neglected by their friends. Artificial sorrows have been added to their natural ones, and in the mingled cup held to their lips there has been more of the bitter than the sweet. What to do with them has been a question easier to ask than to answer. Such as are rich have had friends—the rich always have—who manage to find for them enjoyment and occupation. At any rate they have not had to work for their living, nor with their limited complement of senses had to compete in the sharp battle of life with those who had the full number. Unfortunately, the majority of the blind are born poor. It has been hard to teach them anything that can get them bread; and yet bread and cheese are as essential to them as to any of us who can manage to see where they are stored, and how to secure a portion for ourselves.

The reader has probably visited some of the industrial establishments where the blind are trained to make mats, knit antimacassars, or weave baskets. It is something gained when a blind man or woman has something to do, even though it is but half remunerative. It is a fact to be remembered that a blind man or woman cannot earn a living in this way, and that he or she would starve at it if their wages were not supplemented by the hand of charity. It is clear that if blind people are to earn a living, it must be by something else. This can be done, and it is in accordance with that idea that the blind have before them a better future than that of mat-making or brush-manufacturing. The Normal College and Academy of Music for the Blind at Norwood has been founded under distinguished patronage, and with every appearance of success. In Paris it has been found that about sixty per cent. of the blind follow the profession of music, of whom about one-half become successful pianoforte-tuners, and earn in that way incomes of from £80 to £150 a year. In America, especially at the Perkins Institute, Boston, similar results have been gained. As it is, in Birmingham the most successful instrument tuner is a blind man. The college at Norwood is intended to enable its pupils thus to obtain a living. As the head of it is Mr. F. G. Campbell, a blind gentleman, though you can scarce believe it as you see him at his work or at play with his pupils, who has obtained signal success in America as a teacher of the blind; and he has around him a select and skilful staff, all from the other side the Atlantic. I have been at more than one of the examinations, and have heard gentlemen get up and publicly declare that they have studied the question closely, that they have visited most of the institutions and asylums in Great Britain or on the Continent, and they consider this of Mr. Campbell's superior to them all. Such is the feeling of many of our principal cities. Many towns have subscribed for scholarships and sent scholars. Liverpool in this way sends ten, Glasgow ten, and Leeds two; and there are now many promising children whom the manager is compelled to

exclude from want of funds. A little timely help, and they are saved for life.

Let me enter a little more into detail. The college is placed at Norwood on account of the advantages gained by connection with the musical performances of the Crystal Palace. In no other place in England could the pupils have similar opportunities. Norwood is also near to town; and thus the institution has the aid of the great pianoforte manufacturers who flourish in and about the metropolis. Norwood is also a very healthy place, and the children in their playgrounds in the open air show how well the locality suits them. It is not often we see blind girls and boys joyful at their play; in Norwood emphatically this is the case.

But schoolwork goes on even better than the play. On Tuesdays there is generally a public examination, when people go and judge for themselves. Some part-songs are sung, some difficult studies on the piano are played by boys or girls, as the case may be, and then there are thorough examinations in geography or history or physiology, or reading or writing or arithmetic, all seeming desirous to do their best. In a building just by is the tuning establishment, where old pianos have their strings renewed, new hammers put in, all requisite repairs effected, and, in short, leave the place often a deal better than new. The pupils are taught the anatomy of the piano, so that they can easily tell what is the cause if a piano is out of tune or repair. The pupils in this department are many; it promises to be a profitable one.

What is wanted to make this institution a success is a little external aid. It is really a good work that is going on there; it promises a new era in the treatment of the blind in this country. It is no hasty experiment that is there begun. Before anything was done two years were devoted to collecting information by the executive council of the British and Foreign Blind Association, and it was in 1871 that they published a report, and also a little work entitled the "Education and Employment of the Blind, as it is and ought to be," by their honorary secretary, T. R. Armitage, Esq., M.D. It was in January, 1871, Mr. Campbell came over to this country, and it was in March, 1872, the college was opened. A good thing needs not to bolster itself up with noble names. Such an institution as that at Norwood is its own interpreter and advocate. It may be as well, however, to state that the Marquis of Westminster is president of the institution, that the Queen is the patron, that the treasurer is Sir Rutherford Alcock, and amongst the executive committee are the names of many well known in the religious or musical world. What is wanted is a place where they can have a college for themselves, and funds by means of which the talents of the blind may be turned to good account. Surely wealthy England will respond to the appeal, and "Pity the Poor Blind."

## Varieties.

IRISH AGRICULTURE.—Every traveller must be astonished at the neglect and waste of natural resources. Even in the pasture lands, in which Ireland most excels, the spontaneous liberality of the soil seems to induce the greater indolence and carelessness. The aid of art has been little used in laying down the land to grass, for it is only recently that the trade in grass seeds has assumed any dimensions. Haymaking, as generally

conducted, is a slovenly operation, though labour has been so abundant. Cut too late, I saw the grass often left in small cocks, to be drenched by the autumn rains. A good sweet haystack is the exception, not the rule, on an Irish farm. I never saw such a country for weeds. I saw two men in a field with scythes mowing down ragwort! Had I been travelling afoot or in a car, and not in a railway carriage, I would have sought an explanation of so strange a sight. Had the ragwort been sown as a crop it could hardly have been closer, so as actually to be mown with scythes. Is it used as fodder for any Irish animal? I suspect it was only an extreme illustration of the miserable state of the agriculture too common in Ireland. The amount of weeds is a national disgrace. It is not uncommon to see a ton of weeds in a dozen tons of hay. Many a field has more weeds than a whole parish in England. Small tenants keep land without laying it down with grass seeds, and it becomes the receptacle for all the floating weeds of the district, and then spreads them far and wide. Even for green crops the land is seldom sufficiently cleaned. Smoking heaps of twitch and weeds are rarely seen. If the farmer would give a small reward to boys for heaps of weeds, as they used to do for heads of vermin, they could keep this nuisance under. Ragwort, for instance, can easily be pulled up by the roots in wet weather, and the boys from the workhouse school would gladly attack a field for a trifling reward, and enjoy the fun of the bonfire that the heaps would make. But fields and roadsides are alike neglected, and weeds help to keep Ireland green but poor. I am sure it is no exaggeration to say that the direct loss to Ireland from weeds is above a million and a half sterling. I have heard the loss estimated at nearly double that amount. On the drainage of land vast sums have been expended, and under good management with wonderful results. But even in land that has been drained there is too general carelessness in scouring ditches and keeping the outlets of drains clear. It is better to have no drains than drains choked. In this matter, as in the curse of weeds, the careless indolent habits of the people make agricultural progress uphill work. Bad fences are also everywhere evident. The direct losses from the destruction of produce through this cause are enormous, and it is a constant source of litigation and ill-will. Want of industry and want of sense account for all the backwardness of Irish husbandry. Poor Paddy can dig, but he will not, and to beg he is not ashamed!—*Ireland in 1872. A Tour of Observation*, by Dr. Macaulay, *Editor of the Leisure Hour* (H. S. King and Co.)

CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATIONS.—In their last Report the Commissioners make a special complaint of "Misrepresentations of candidates respecting their age." It is, they say, an invidious task to sit in judgment upon "the sound health and good character" of any young man who wishes a Government appointment; but to determine his age is a yet more delicate operation. They say—"We give prominence now to the subject in the hope that future candidates, especially in Ireland, where (owing perhaps to faulty methods of registration) the temptation to such frauds appears chiefly to prevail, may take warning from the reprobation which cannot but be excited by such attempts to defraud not only the public, but also their fellows."

DILIGENT IN BUSINESS.—A man industrious in his calling, if without the fear of God, becomes a drudge to worldly ends; vexed when disappointed, overjoyed in success. Mingle but the fear of God with business, it will not abate a man's industry, but sweeten it; if he prosper, he is thankful to God that gives him power to get wealth; if he miscarry, he is patient under the will and dispensation of the God he fears. It turns the very employment of his calling to a kind of religious duty and exercise of his religion, without damage or detriment to it.—Sir Matthew Hale.

DIVINE BLESSING.—A good man fearing God shall find his blessing upon him. It is true, that the portion of men fearing God is not in this life; oftentimes he meets with crosses, afflictions, and troubles in it; his portion is of a higher and more excellent state and condition than this life; yet a man that fears God hath also his blessing in this life, even in relation to his very temporal condition. For, either his honest and just intentions and endeavours are blessed with success and comfort, or if they be not, yet even his crosses and disappointments are turned into a blessing; for they make him more humble and less esteeming in this present world, and setting his heart upon a better. For it is an everlasting truth, that all things shall work together for the best, to them that love and fear Almighty God, and therefore, certainly such a man is the wisest man.—Sir Matthew Hale.

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